Developing Teaching & Learning in Africa

Decolonising Perspectives

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Chapter Six

Humanising and Decolonising Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) in South Africa

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Genesis: Blacks and Adult Education

In chapter 1, Msila explores decolonisation in basic education. He invites the reader to investigate how the basic education sector can be indigenised and diversified to meet the needs of the learners' communities. Similarly, this chapter examines the decolonisation of adult education. Adult education is distinct from basic education, and among the differences is that it draws its learners from the adult population. Nordhaug (1986) cites Lindeman who maintains that anyone defining the concept, *adult education*, should combine the age element and/or a life cycle factor. The age determines whom an adult is and can be looked at the compulsory school age. The life cycle refers to the position where the person is in their life. Nafukho, Amutabi and Otunga (2005) point out that adult education is defined by how adulthood and maturity define its limits.

Additionally, Baatjes and Baatjes (2008) opine that adult education refers to education that is vocational and technical. Some think that adult education means literacy or Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET); some regard Adult Education and Training (AET) as synonymous to ABET (Skills-Universe, 2010; Triple E Training, 2013). However, literacy and ABET are part of adult education, but adult education is more than these. It includes peace education, cooperatives, livelihoods, environmental education, health programmes, popular education, and vocational education as well as various other forms (Baatjes & Baatjes, 2008).

Adult education includes both formal learning, non-formal learning and informal learning. In this chapter, as we define adult education, we adopt the UNESCO definition as cited by Myers, Conte and Rubenson (2014:4):

The term 'adult education' denotes the entire body of organised educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in the two fold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development; adult education, however, must not be considered as an entity in itself, it is a sub-division, and an integral part of, a global scheme for lifelong education and learning.

Aitchison (2013) is more forthright albeit his narrow definition as to what qualifies as adult education; he defines adult education as "education provision for people aged 15 and over who are not engaged in formal schooling or higher education and who have an education level of less than grade 9". His definition excludes continuing education after Grade 9.

Burke (2005) states that aspects such as history, politics, economics and geography have influenced adult education in developing countries. The history of education in South Africa demonstrates that adult education has had more learners from black communities than any other over the decades. In one study, Aitchison (2012) illustrates a minimal number of whites who were illiterate in South Africa. Several chapters in this book refer to the need for a humanising and critical pedagogy that liberates and empowers. Furthermore, contributors in this volume have thrown a gauntlet of how, as we decolonise education, do we ensure that some aspects of Western education coexist with indigenous knowledges. Arguably, it remains a truism that those who have embraced Western knowledges only, whether consciously or unconsciously, marginalised indigenous knowledges are disempowered. When an adult has internalised certain cultures, it might be to the detriment of his well-being. Bad education can make one docile and not challenge the circumstances which education might misinform as acceptable. South Africa continues to need an adult education system that would enable adults to challenge the status quo. Sadly, as Biko (1987) puts it, the black man (sic) develops a two-faced attitude to accommodate the challenges in his society. Biko relates a story of how he observed a black adult whose co-worker was a white man who was constantly verbally abusing him. The white man insulted the black colleague and Biko later asked the white man why he was so hostile towards his

black colleague. The white man claimed that the black man was a loafer who only understood the language of insults, and as he said this, the black man smiled. The black man retorted by stating that he was used to the white man's insults. It was clear that the black man was resigned and had accepted the conditions as unchangeable. Biko (1987:102-103) contends:

Then I was sick. I thought for a moment I do not understand black society. After some two hours I came back to this guy, I said to him do you really mean it? The man changed, he became very bitter, he was telling me how he wants to leave any moment, but what can he do? He does not have any skills ... if he does not work, he has got to take it.

Several aspects related to education are highlighted by this example. It is natural to the black man here for the white man to insult him because he is dependent upon the white man. Biko knows the black man is bitter every day but he cannot display "any form of what is called cheek to his boss". This is what Biko refers to as two-folded attitude of the black man to his existence in South Africa. Apartheid education was to prepare the black people for subservience (Biko, 1987; Kallaway, 1988; Msila, 2007). Black Consciousness (BC) seeks to correct the false images of black people in terms of their education. In a section below, we will see how Paulo Freire (1972) and his colleagues in Brazil tried to eradicate education that leads to docility by employing the concept of conscientisation. Like Paulo Freire's pedagogy, the BC philosophy sought to see education as liberating, freeing the black oppressed learner from the creations of colonialism where the black person is perpetually inferior.

This chapter explicates the role of education and what it means to decolonise adult education especially in a society like South Africa where apartheid and colonialism distorted the content of what should be learnt for decades. It focuses on how the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) ought to address some formal education myths that have become reality for the oppressed over the years. What is referred to as ABET today emanates from the original 'night schools' which were reserved for adult learners after work. Many adults who wanted to attain matriculation qualification (Grade 12 today) attended these night schools. The chapter is organised as follows:

- o The Night School Movement
- o Critical Pedagogy, Self-Reflection and Adult Education
- o ABET and the Current Education Policies
- o How do we Decolonise ABET
- o Decolonising through Critical Literacy
- o Conclusion

The Night School Movement

Edward Roux (1972) opines that the struggle of the black oppressed for freedom in South Africa was synonymous the struggle for education and epistemic freedom. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) writes about how colonialism brought with it culturecides, historicides, and linguicides and that the search for epistemic freedom is the crux of decolonisation and epistemic freedom. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) also points out how colonialism changed the first African institutions such as the university, thus making them more colonised.

When the adult education movement became popular in the 1940s, it sought to address illiteracy, among others. The Adult Committee Report in 1946 pointed out that 80% of the Africans were illiterate. The radical National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) was instrumental in developing the Night School Movement in the 1940s. However, although the night schools became strong in the 1940s the very first night schools in South Africa can be traced back to 1925. Roux (1964:346) states:

One of the most notable achievements of the radical student movement in South Africa has been its contribution to the African night school movement. The history of these night schools begins in 1925, when the Johannesburg communist founded their first night school in a Ferreirstown slum. They taught by candlelight, without blackboards or desks. The pupils sat on benches and struggled with complicated political doctrine at the same time they learnt their letters.

Such night schools from the 1940s developed in various cities of the Union of South Africa, (known today as the Republic of South Africa). Teachers were not always qualified, and it was frequently difficult to have all learners present because others would be on night shift at work. Homework was usually impossible as workers were always tired from their shifts. The curriculum was English, Arithmetic and General Knowledge. However, as early as 1929, in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, night schools taught reading in isiZulu as well as elementary Arithmetic. As the apartheid policies intensified, government closed many adult education centres. When the Nationalist Party came to power it took control of black education and blocked all efforts at oppositional adult education (Prinsloo, 1995).

Roux (1972) points out that, although the 1955 Congress of the People's Freedom Charter called for the end to illiteracy, the National Party government that came into power in 1948 undermined adult education work and refused to subsidise night schools. The Communist Party and other liberation movements were later outlawed. Years later though, the night schools were revived in various cities in

South Africa. One of the authors of this chapter taught in several night schools in the Eastern Cape where the day curriculum was simply rehashed and taught as is to adult learners at night. The downside was that many teachers were not prepared to teach adult learners and were simply utilising the pedagogy utilised in day schools rather than the more preferred andragogy for adult learners. In fact, until recently, adult illiteracy did not interest many as the apartheid state ran poorly resourced night schools.

When 1994 came, many people thought the original model of the night schools would be improved. However, Aitchison (2013) claims that the dismal failure by government to support adult education surfaced. Aitchison also avers that there was failure by government to attain “adult education renaissance”. Rule (2006) also highlights the neglect regarding the constitutional right of adults to basic education. Rule (2006:120) points out that ABET draws on the language of democracy, redress, and human rights, and that the official purpose of ABET is to:

- o **Restructure and transform** programmes and centres to respond better to the human resources, economic, and development needs of the Republic.
- o **Advance** strategic priorities determined by national policy directives at all levels of governance and management within the Adult Basic Education and Training sector.
- o **Respond to the needs** of the Republic and the labour market and of the communities served by the centres.
- o **Complement** the skills development strategy in cooperation with the Department of Labour.

Despite the above though, Rule (2006) argues that ABET has been a disservice to the poor, many of whom desperately need education empowerment.

Critical Pedagogy, Self-Reflection and Adult Learning

In addition to the above, Degener (2002) claims that there is a need for adult programmes to be designed around the backgrounds and interests of students. In addition, Degener avers that critical adult education programmes also demonstrate to students how they can use skills gained to transform their lives and the society. Progressive adult education programmes should not promote passivity and docility among learners. Degener (2002) cites Macedo who points out that non-critical programmes are criticised for ignoring the political, social, and economic factors that have schemed to marginalise people. One of adult education’s main aims though should be to intensely change the learners’ lives. Adult education that does not empower learners to improve their lives is futile; usually traditional education programmes, especially those under apartheid

were meant to brainwash learners (Kallaway, 1988). Numerous adult learners in South Africa may be prevented from accessing education due to poverty. Degener (2002:27-28) posits:

Too many people are prevented from reaching their full potential because they do not have access to the adequate nutrition, housing, healthcare and education that so many of us take for granted. Learning to read and write will not change this imbalance. Adult literacy programmes that make an effort to reflect a critical pedagogy try to help students understand what forces have contributed to their positions in society and to see how literacy can help them influence those forces and transform their lives.

Any transformative adult learners' programme should have teachers who are prepared to learn to unlearn old practices. Many educators in South Africa were trained as teachers in programmes that elevated the dominant culture and marginalised the indigenous African cultures. Hanson et al. (2018) spell out the definition of progressive adult education as an interdisciplinary field that often includes social justice, hence it prompts a decolonising and indigenising approach. Hanson et al. also perceive relevant adult education as a system whose programmes include indigenous epistemology and includes a culturally responsive pedagogy. These writers have also realised that there can be no decolonisation without the individuals involved having undergone the process of self-critical reflection. Hanson et al. (2018:100) argue:

Critical reflection is understood as the process of questioning assumptions and power relations, which catalyses a change of perspective. This personal transformation brings forth emancipatory development practices that nurture social transformation. Furthermore, this process precedes indigenisation.

Literature on adult education highlights the importance of self-determination, self-regulation, and self-reflection for successful learning of adults (Kellenberg, Schmidt & Werner, 2017). Self-reflection is critical in transforming one's circumstances. When an adult learner realises the need for change and self-discovery, they will be able to understand decolonisation's transformative qualities. For self-critical reflection to happen in adult education, Freire underscores dialogic teaching, which refers to the active engagement by both teachers and learners. Darder (2017) declares that Freire opposed the limits of Western pedagogical tradition that dismembers knowledge and also supported the banking approach to education. Darder points out that Freire understood banking approach as tied to the intellectual history of the West where the mind and the body are adversaries in the process of intellectual transformation. "This tradition of disembodiment shapes anti-dialogical classroom practices and expectations that students compartmentalise themselves, without contending with the manner in which this approach to learning

reproduces asymmetrical relations of power that oppress organic constructions of knowledge” (Darder, 2017:84). In decolonial classrooms, students should be able to reflect on issues of the dynamism of learning as they express their identity. Education should not lead to alienation. Freire opposed this alienating form of education as he emphasised the need for a humanising pedagogy where enquiry is problematised and dialogic teaching existed (Roche, 2016).

Problem posing education was not only a notion, which is in conflict with the banking concept but also one which for Freire, offered hope for alleviating the situation for the oppressed of all social, cultural and racial backgrounds. Paulo Freire summed up the difference between banking education and problem-posing education: “banking education treats students as objects of assistance; problem-posing education makes them critical thinkers” (1970:71). Other educational thinkers, particularly humanists, social constructivists and those with radical or similar alternative viewpoints, shared such sentiments.

For Freire, reflection was informed by conscientisation and enabled learners for praxis; because he found an affinity between reflection and action. Furthermore, Freire found that action without reflection was merely action for action’s sake (Redmond, 2016). Freire pointed out that there could be no education without reflection. Critical reflection ensures that the learner would be able to enhance own reality. Additionally, critical reflection in adult education liberates the adult learner to realise the importance of the diversity of knowledge. The adult learner should be exposed to education that demonstrates that it is not Western education only that matters in education. In fact, critical reflection in decolonisation means understanding the hierarchisation and racialisation of knowledge. In the cities or townships in South Africa, a black person might refer affectionately to another black person in Nguni as *umlungu wam* (literally meaning my white person) thus regarding the other person a provider, a master or a *baas* (boss). The equivalent in Sotho languages is *lekgowa laka*. Many adult workers grew up during apartheid times believed that the white people are superior because they have power and they provide. Even when some black people marvel at great inventions such as the television, microwave or a wonderful car, they would laud this by stating, *umlungu mdala* (the white man is dexterous). These are social constructs, and Hayes (2016) declares that the social constructs that recount people’s identities impact the ways in which they perceive the world.

During similar phases of Paulo Freire’s investigations in Brazil, he learned how the adult workers had internalised the superiority of the white person and they understood the superiority as a consequence of nature; that they could do nothing

about the status quo. In extending the examples above, two black people may greet one another by saying to each other, *mlungu wam* (literally, my white person) thus showing respect and admiration for the other. Again, here one sees the reverence of whiteness. Without really thinking about it, even the ones who are supposed to understand the folly of the natural disposition of whiteness will use this. Freire's investigation was mainly among illiterate Brazilians, but in South Africa, even formally educated Africans fall into the trap of some of these social constructs. Numerous people may regard such as trivial everyday niceties which are harmless. Yet what one can find hidden behind these phrases, are colonial and internalised beliefs.

Maitra and Guo (2019) refer to such beliefs as Occidentalism, which is discourse about the superiority of the West and its knowledge. Maitra and Guo also point out that the Occidentalist discourse has been pivotal in dumbing down the 'other' since the first encounters between Europe and Africa as colonial power spread in Africa. The North-South global divide has been entrenched by the taking over of the Western knowledge and the domination of whiteness. Maitra and Guo (2019) raise the argument that practices of lifelong learning are associated in the perpetuation of some colonial worldviews by depicting certain groups as deficient.

Effective lifelong adult learning will purge the inferiority experienced by black workers, however subtle it can be. Progressive and decolonised adult education would oppose the hegemony of Western knowledge. The ABET centres cannot and should not pretend to offer education that is value free when colonial knowledge maintains the status quo. As decolonial education challenges the domination of Western knowledge, it should uphold the various forms of knowledge. [...] "intercultural and postcolonial approaches have for many years now argued for the diversification of knowledge production and for the recognition of plural systems of knowledge" (Maitra & Guo, 2019:13). These authors also point out that there should be much emphasis to decolonise the minds of lifelong learners, practitioners, and policymakers in order to challenge the passivity, colonisation and marginalisation of learners in both classrooms and workplaces. Lifelong learning ought to accommodate cognitive justice that asserts the diversity of knowledges and the equality of knowers (Maitra & Guo, 2019).

In decolonial classrooms, the critical nature of the Anticolonial Education theory – a tool that is necessary for decolonising the classroom setting is necessary. Freire (1970) utilises this theory as he highlights the destructive nature of the oppressor.

Adult learners though, should believe in their power to change the dominating nature of the oppressor. The Anticolonial Education Theory emanates from Freire's concept of learning in order to liberate the future of the oppressed (Hayes, 2016). Hayes (2016) adds that Anticolonial Education Theory underscores that the voices of the marginalised groups are necessary to enhancing an inclusive educational environment, which has become a space of solidarity. Anticolonial Education Theory also emphasises the need for indigenous people to oppose Eurocentric knowledge that disparages and belittles other epistemologies. The indigenous people's cultures and histories are frequently obscured by 'white narratives' that 'other' the experiences of the indigenous. Furthermore, Hayes (2016) opines that the white supremacist culture seeks to marginalise the indigenous cultures. "The last and most essential element of the Anticolonial Education frames the 'undoing' or unravelling of Eurocentric social influences using it for a process of unlearning in order to transform" (Hayes, 2016:18). The adult learners should be able to see education as that which can address poverty, gender violence, patriarchy, racism, landlessness, and joblessness. Effective decolonised adult education will be based on sound principles such as these. Docile adults who do not see alternatives to whiteness and Eurocentric approaches will never be able to build a rigorous economy as well as education sustainability.

ABET and Current Education Policies

In order to attain transformation and equitable society, the South African government policy supports the idea of an empowering adult education. ABET is a concept whose ideals are to support lifelong learning and development and was conceptualised as a stream that would be available to adult learners who want to complete their basic education. ABET also provides the learners with learning tools and skills that would yield to recognised qualifications. Throughout the country, there are service providers, training companies and colleges that are ABET providers. The Skills Portal (2016) declares that there are 3.3 million illiterate adults in South Africa. ABET offers flexibility that suits specific needs of certain individuals, providing access to recognised certificates. There are however, many who question the relevance of ABET to workplace efficiency. Many believe that ABET may be training that drills learners in routine jobs with no attention to knowledge and values (Skills Portal, 2016). ABET has four levels that are equivalent to Grades R-9. The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) has registered the following learning areas for level 4 or National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 1 (Grade 12 equivalent):

- o Language, Literacy and Communication – 20 credits
- o Mathematical Literacy – 16 credits
- o Arts and Culture – 16 credits
- o Economic and Management Science – 16 credits
- o Human and Social Science – 16 credits
- o Life Orientation – 16 credits
- o Natural Science – 16 credits
- o Technology – 16 credits
- o Mathematical Science -13 credits
- o Additional Language – 16 credits

In addition to the above, adult learners can choose to take courses in Travel and Tourism, Agriculture, Early Childhood Development and Ancillary Health Care.

Some researchers have questioned the relevance of ABET after its initial inception (Ndlovu, 1999). Furthermore, Ndlovu conducted a study among women of the Mkhuhlu area in Mpumalanga Province and discovered that ABET was not providing relevant skills needed to develop the women participants. The women stated that ABET did not enable them to improve their quality of life. In Ndlovu's study (1999), it was found that the ABET programmes did not include effective skills training to improve the lives of learners on social, economic, and educational levels. Aitchison (2013) writes about the capacity that lacked to those who were supposed to lead adult education. He points out that the national Department of Education was unable to tackle the nationalising of education provision, resources, and teacher deployment. As a result of these challenges, ABET learners were in desperate situation where schoolteachers and higher education demanded continuation of the "lifestyle to which they had become accustomed". In Tawiah and Ngmenkpieo (2018), the researchers found that rural women who had undergone ABET training lagged behind in knowledge and skills for livelihood. The rural women were left disempowered due to the lack of relevant skills for employment or to be self-employed in the programme (Tawiah & Ngmenkpieo, 2018).

Decolonising ABET

As seen above, the original adult centres (night schools) were more focused on literacy and political education as various political activists ran them. During the apartheid times, the night schools became part of the system of segregated education offering education that is watered down. Yet when we ask today how to decolonise what is called Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), we

need to ensure that adult education addresses past imbalances as it empowers the learners. Furthermore, today decolonised adult education would also try to address the gap between the haves and the have-nots through technology use. A decolonised adult education refers to a system that treats adult learners with respect while infusing indigenous values and languages that were marginalised by apartheid and colonialism. Padayachee, Matimolane and Ganas (2018) write of a need for epistemologically diverse curricula that among others, may lead to education for sustainable development. Padayachee et al. (2018) also posit that there is strong need for a balance to be struck between theory and contextually relevant knowledge in curricula if decolonisation is to be achieved. Effective adult and basic education will lead to societal transformation. When empowered, many adults do influence the direction society adopts, and communities embrace.

The theory embedded in adult education should aspire towards liberatory education and social justice, both values that have been discussed in several chapters in this book. Additionally, because learning embraces Western knowledge and indigenous knowledge, it should address diversity as it promotes critical pedagogy. Adult learners should use the curriculum to survive in their daily lives within work environment, communities and society in general. In fact, ABET was established to support lifelong learning and knowledge required for economic and political participation and transformation applicable to a range of contexts (Skills Portal, 2016). In an age of decolonisation, these objectives are critical. Clover, Sanford, Bell and Johnson (2016) affirm about the need for critical and radical traditions of adult education. Feminist adult education, anti-racist education, decolonising methodologies, transformative, and radical learning are some of the critical themes in adult education today. Decolonised curriculum addresses apartheid and colonial vestiges.

The re-education of various adult learner's teachers is important for an education system that would truly decolonise. The social sciences are good examples for decolonising the curriculum. Through history and culture, adult learners can learn to regain their identity and self-dignity. Learning history in decolonised classrooms means reshaping knowledge. Smith (2016:30) points out why we need the shift towards decolonisation in education as she explicates the link between decolonisation and transformation:

Decolonisation is linked to social transformation because it calls for the 'de-linking' or reshaping of societal spheres away from colonial/modern systems to allow all knowledges and systems to be given equal voice. Thereby, changing society. However, transformation stems from the need to alter past

injustices whereas decolonisation aims to dismantle them. Consequently, decolonisation is a process that can lead to societal transformation.

To redress the social sciences, adult learners would need to understand the muted voices of the oppressed as they learn to retell their own stories. Education for redress cannot be delivered for its own sake but should be seen as an instrument of social redress. The study of social sciences can address several issues including human rights, racial bigotry, and cultural domination.

Several authors have highlighted the nearness between curriculum decolonisation process and sustainable development (Padayachee et al., 2018). Furthermore, Padayachee et al. (2018) claim that curriculum decolonisation and education for sustainable development are critical for institutional and societal reform. Therefore, these are linked between curriculum transformation and sustainable development. This link has been perceived crucial in preparing graduates for the future. In an aptly titled paper, *Decolonising Sustainable Development*, Razak (2017) writes about how Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) “blends with indigenous knowledge and wisdom with the existing ‘modern’ knowledge in articulating ‘newer’ ideas that have been cast aside by the excesses of colonisation” (Razak, 2017). Razak also points out that decolonised ESD is pivotal for a sustainable future. Adult education programmes in South Africa would be incomplete without sustainable development, for education geared towards future generations should be among the practical goals of a decolonised adult education. Adult education currently, unlike that under apartheid should play an intense transformative role.

Tikly (2019) declares that education policy should be re-oriented and harnessed to processes of economic, cultural, and political transformation. If adult education does this, learners would be able to embrace social and environmental justice. Furthermore, Tikly (2019) asserts that the vision of education for sustainable development hold an ambitious Pan-African vision of transformative change. Therefore, sustainable development is able to oppose the consequences of the colonial encounter. All learners especially the poor with no social capital, require sustainable development for it is through skills that they will be able to play part in their economy. The relevant adult learning sites should reflect the following elements as illustrated in Figure 6.1:

Learning Site

Figure 6.1 **Adult Learner and Decolonisation Factors (Lalendle, Msila & Matlabe, 2020)**

The figure above displays some of the elements adult learner need to decolonise education. Decolonial education should reflect the envisaged environment and the reality of the oppressed indigenous people. Numerous aspects should inform a decolonisation adult education class.

Among the values that need to be emphasised in decolonised, liberatory teaching is the will to oppose patriarchy, racism, and social injustice. Formal and informal content is needed in adult education to uplift feminist values in education. Social justice education should critically examine social relations. Schniedewind (1987) maintains that learning site interaction should always reflect feminist principles to

enhance student learning. Webb, Allen and Walker (2002) highlight six principles of feminist pedagogy, which can be useful in adult education learning sites:

1. Reformation of the teacher-learner relationship – learners need to share power.
2. Empowerment – education needs to be a practice of freedom.
3. Community building – in learning sites, learners should build community where all are equal.
4. Voice privileging – different voices should emerge in classrooms.
5. Respect for the diversity of personal experience – emphasis on personal experience and validation. This personal experience leads to respect and empathy.
6. Challenging the traditional pedagogical notions – ideas should be contested and challenged. Teachers should be prepared to relearn as they challenge the origins of knowledge.

Webb, Allen and Walker (2002) also point out that the theory of feminist pedagogy opposes the current emphasis on efficiency and objectivity that perpetuates masculine domination in rationality by bringing forth alternative views based on feminist principles. In decolonial learning sites, learners should have this experience of feminist pedagogy. The learners ought to share power and be able to challenge the notions of a patriarchal society in the learning sites. It is important for them to appreciate their active roles in learning and teaching as they contest the stereotypical portrayal presented by patriarchy. Learners should use learning sites to confront principles of a sexist society as they transform their lives. Schniedewind (1987) points out that the greatest threat to feminism at university is “the ease with which we can allow the curriculum to reflect thought without action” (Schniedewind, 1987:178). Adult education should be a source of inspiration for all communities; learners who would like to make a change in their society. Adult education centres should not mimic the miseducation that happens in learning sites that glorify banking approaches reflected by rote learning. When education does not oppose social ills, it is unlikely to challenge the status quo.

Shor (1987) contends that a curriculum that generates critical thought and leads to interactive learning should be lauded;. “The challenge to every liberal arts course is how much participation does it mobilise, how does it relate its body-of-knowledge to other disciplines, to the communities and literacies of the students, and to larger conditions of society” (Shor, 1987:21).

Arguably, language is one of the most important factors in education. In a time when the decolonisation debates have been widespread, the decolonisation of languages has also become critical. In a society where English and Afrikaans are still dominant, the adult learner might be curious to know when other indigenous languages will feature in the learning and teaching process. Language is critical

to consciousness and awareness of one's society. The use of a language other than the learners' own can intensify the process of alienation. Freire's pedagogy emphasises the connection between critical use of language and a consciousness of oneself in social relations (Finlay & Faith, 1987). It is crucial for adult learners to use their indigenous languages; otherwise, if they are only forced to use English there might be less interaction in classrooms. Biko (1987:107-108) refers to this as the process of inward looking by students:

We have a society here in South Africa, which recognises in the main two languages, English and Afrikaans as official languages. These are languages that you have to use at school, at university I mean, or in pursuit of any discipline when you are studying as a black man. Unfortunately, the books you read are in English, English is a second language to you; you have probably been taught in a vernacular [...] As a result you never quite catch everything that is in a book; you certainly understand the paragraph [...] This makes you less articulate as a black man generally, and this makes you more inward-looking; you feel things rather than say them, and this applies to Afrikaans as well---much more to English than to Afrikaans; Afrikaans is essentially a language that has developed here, and I think in many instances in its idiom, it relates much better to African languages; but English is completely foreign, and therefore people find it difficult to move beyond a certain point in their comprehension of the language.

The language shapes the dialogue and critical pedagogy in learning sites. Finlay and Faith (1987) point out that language use shapes the way people see their culture. Language also helps in transforming habitual thought into critical consciousness. Language is power and learners will feel powerlessness when learning sites marginalise their indigenous languages. Multilingual sites will empower learners who will be able to access education in their own languages. No progressive learning site will want to experience the 'culture of silence'. The exclusive use of English should not lead to illiteracy and passivity. Indigenous languages that learners speak should be part of teaching and learning. The use of indigenous languages as medium can and should challenge the dominant culture. Finlay and Faith (1987:82) claim:

[...] our students fear and distrust the culture that runs the schools, a culture that they perceive as subordinating individual activity to the needs of a consumer economy. Since our students are not children, however, their education is complicated by their awareness that they have become accomplices in maintaining this culture and its values.

When adult learners use their indigenous languages such as isiXhosa, Xitsonga and isiNdebele in decolonial learning sites, they are able to bring their cultures and epistemologies as well. Language is the basis of literacy and constitutes the learners' reality. Freire believes that the goal of a literacy programme is to help

learners to be critically conscious of their connection between their lives and the larger society and to empower them to change their environment (Fiore & Elsasser, 1987).

Decolonisation through Critical Literacy

If adult learners are able to attain social justice and freedom from the dominant culture, they should have the literacy skills that would equip them. From the very first night schools discussed above, the idea to bring forth learning to read was a political act. The activists who championed night schools sought to create adult learners who would share power. Brown (1987) proclaims that a non-literate person may have power within a non-literate subculture but within the dominant culture, a non-reader is marginal. "Learning to read gives access to information, protection against fraud, and participation as a citizen. Miller (nd) also points out that education is a political act because literacy builds an engaged, informal and participatory citizenry." Through literacy, people are able to access democracy and social justice. Literacy makes a huge difference to the learners, their families and their communities. Adults who are literate are able to be vocal in society and may play an active role in progressive groups as they access their right to voice their opinions.

All educators should understand their job as a political act. Brown (1987) writes about how Paulo Freire developed materials that made it possible for adult learners to learn to read in 30-40 hours. Freire achieved this after he understood the political dimensions of reading. Freire also discovered that nonliterates, through reading, became aware that they could change their lives although at first they thought that their lives were due to God's will (Brown, 1987). When the nonliterates became literate, they could distinguish between nature and culture and got to understand that there was a distinction because they were the makers of culture. They realised that they could change their circumstances. Literacy made the adult learners realise the importance of conscientisation because they could analyse reality and transform their lives. For Paulo Freire, education is either liberating or domesticating and if literacy is not domesticating, it must then be part of conscientisation (Brown, 1987).

The struggle for literacy in South Africa has been equivalent to the struggle for freedom. Carroll (2018) states that there is an improvement in literacy rates among adults in South Africa. In 2017, adult literacy rate was 87%. This increased from 76,2% in 1980 (Knoema, n.d.). This includes numeracy, which is the ability to make basic arithmetic calculations.

As we agree about the need to decolonise adult education, some experts such as Aitchison (2012) point out that South Africa has failed to achieve the “golden future of literacy and adult basic education”. Aitchison laments that fact that the right to adult basic education is not yet real as long as it is not quickly achievable or enforceable. Yet, the history of Black Consciousness has shown how Biko and his peers used Freire’s concept to build successful community programmes in the Eastern Cape Province where black people became self-reliant. Recent studies however demonstrate that there is still much room for improvement for South Africa’s literacy. In 2016, a study by the Central Connecticut University showed that South Africa is ranked as one of the illiterate countries in the world (BusinessTECH, 2016). The study examined the literate behaviour rather than the country’s ability to read. The five categories on which the study was based on were libraries, newspapers, education inputs and outputs, and computer availability. South Africa was ranked 56th overall among 61 countries (BusinessTECH, 2016).

Conclusion

Like other forms of education in South Africa, Adult Education was negatively influenced for decades by the legacies of apartheid and colonisation. Yet, today Adult Education can be a conduit of addressing several social ills including patriarchy, illiteracy, racism and sexism. Furthermore, progressive adult education can help entrench the culture of lifelong learning that would yield empowered and liberated citizenry. In this chapter, we concentrated more on the decolonisation of ABET and demonstrated why decolonisation is so critical today. Western knowledges or Eurocentric philosophies have dominated in South Africa for years, and arguably, some may contend that today those legacies are stalling meaningful changes in not only adult education but also all forms of education including basic education and higher education. When students started the #FeesMustFall campaign in 2015, it was an attempt to speed the transformation process by also calling for a decolonised system. Many African countries continue to struggle as they seek lasting solutions to decolonise education. Lifelong learning is critical in that it focuses mainly on workers who want to improve qualifications for better living. Yet, decolonisation needs new intellectuals who will understand diversity and ways to use indigenous knowledges as some form of an antidote to the internalised Western knowledges. Decolonised lifelong learning should be able to address the social ills brought by Eurocentrism. Adult learners must through critical pedagogy be able to decolonise the ideological underpinnings of colonial domination especially racialised privileging of whiteness (Maitra & Guo, 2016).

The need to decolonise all forms of education in Africa has never been as urgent as various African states seek to topple the exclusive recognition of Western knowledges which disempower the historically oppressed. All adult learners should be exposed to decolonised education that magnifies their purpose in life to improve their communities and enhance their self-identities. Decolonisation needs to seep through all institutions in the society. It is now apt to close the chapter by citing Maitra and Guo (2019:16) who posit:

By decolonisation, we are not calling for an uncritical acceptance of knowledge systems. Rather, the emphasis should be on being open-minded enough to acknowledge the value of lifelong learning systems based on 'objectively ascertained merits [...] We believe lifelong learning practices need to embrace cognitive justice that asserts the diversity of knowledges and equality of knowers.

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